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THE PAVEMENT OF THE CATHEDRAL OF SIENA

The Pavement of the Cathedral of Siena

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The pavement of the Cathedral of Siena offers us a unique example of decoration, so characteristic, that it is very difficult to find, even in a reduced scale, such an example in older times. However, in the portal of the Duomo in Lucca, there is a frieze with marble with touches of graffito to give relief to the scene, and which dates back to 1223. Before this time, the Romanesque artists had sometimes inserted a few tondi with geometrical designs enclosing Christian symbols, like the doves going to water at a chalice; but in this manner it was only an intarsio (inlaid) of white on black, without any trace of graffito, as can be seen, for example in the Church of Saint Miniato al Monte over Florence. White the fragments in Lucca and the pavement in Siena, on which besides the use of various colours of marble, there is the addition of graffito, which gives relief to the scenes already characterized by the use of polychrome material: they are a new invention of which we have no example unless we go back to the Roman mosaics, the technièque of which though so fundamentally different.

However, if we are to trust Vasari; Duccio di Boninsegna was the inventor of this kind of art and much more, he had made a few designs for the pa-

vement of the Duomo. Some critics doubt Vasari's declarations, as the old pavement of the Duomo has disappeared completely. Nowadays it is impossibile to control the affirmation wich though it may be well delied on, by the fact that Duccio may have taken the Lucchese tradition and given it a new impetus. Anyhow, it is evident from the use of the new wave of paving that was taken a few vears after Duccio's death, how this kind must have been well known to the Sienese artists, who appear at once masters of this new technique.

The oldest document referring to the execution of a part of the new pavement dates back to 1369-70, when the people of the town having given up the plan of enlarging the cathedral, turned their cares to adorning, and completing the present one.

Besides one part of the pavement under the dome, in front of the high altar (perhaps the stories that were later replaced with those by Franchi), the following were then made: The square of the wheel of fortune, in the central nave. The artists mentioned are Antonio di Brunaccio, Sano di Marco and Francesco di Ser Antonio. The rest of the church, it is said, was paved with slabs of marble with inlaid ornamental designs or a combination of geometrical squares.

In 1406 Marchese di Adamo made the wheel in the centre of which there is the figure of Fortress, in front of the sacristy, while previously the mosaic square had been made in the central nave; it shows the symbols of Siena of her friends.

In 1423, under the direction of Domenico di Niccolò dei Cori, there was a retaking of the work; the ambulacrum of the choir between the altar of Saint Ansano and the one of the Holy Sacrament was adorned with various stories and figures. Besides the two large compositions of the massacre of the Philistines and the battle against Amorrean Kings, there is in the centre the tondo (circle) in which David the Psalmist sits on a throne, while smaller squares show David with a sling and Goliath the giant, Salomon and Joshua. It is said that David and the two figures of David with a sling and Goliath are works by Niccolò, while Paolo di Martino and others were probably the artists of the other compositions and ornamental friezes.

When the work of the ambulacrum of the choir was over, the continuation of the work for the right transept was begun by Domenico di Bartolo di Ghezzo making the scene of the Emperor Sigismund in 1434; and by Pietro del Minella making the Death of Absalom.

Shortly after, Antonio Federighi made the marvellous allegory of the seven ages of man in front of the present Chapel del Voto.

After an interval of about 30 years, the works of the pavement were retaken again. This time the left transept was begun, for which the imposing composition of the Siege of Bethulia was designed. Differently attributed to Matteo di Giovanni and Urbano da Cortona, it was materially made by Antonio Federighi.

But the greatest impetus to the accomplishment of the pavement was given by the new Rector of the Opera del Duomo, Alberto Aringhieri. In the period of his function, that is from 1481 to 1498, besides works of great importance, such as the chapel of Saint John and the Baptistery of Saint John, the continuation of the pavement of the Duomo was particulary taken care of. The fist ti be made was Hermes Trismegisto, put at the beginning of the main nave, and the author of which, is said to be Giovanni di Maestro Stefano. After these come the sibyls of the two side naves, the designs of which were made by the best artists of that time, among these were Matteo di Giovanni, Antonio Federighi, Guidoccio Cozzarelli and Neroccio di Bartolomeo. Successively, the ornament of the right transept was completed; representing the two great stories of the « Expulsion of Herod » designed by Benvenuto di Giovanni del Guasta, and the « Massacre of the Innocents » by Matteo di Giovanni, which is perhaps the finest piece of the entire pavement. And finally the scene of the story of « Jepthah's Daughter » by Bastiano di Francesco di Sano, thus completing also the left transept. And it is wonderful to think that this imposing work was made exactly when Siena was crossing one of the most agitated period of her history.

In 1505 Pinturicchio completed, with the Allegory of Fortune », the graffiti of the central nave, and with him, ends this first manner of marble ornamentation of the pavement. In Fact, when in 1518 it was continued and accomplished what remained in-

finished, Beccafumi created a new tecnique by using white and gray and black marble and graffiti on white and on gray, attainting the effect of a real Charcoal drawing full of shades. The wonderful scenes of the life of Moses, the « Scarfice of Abraham » and the « Phophet Elijah » are by himself. They are distributed between the High Altar and the space under the cupola.

Thus the pavement was completed; but the necessary cares to keep it and renew it when it was worn out by the walking of the people, was never lift. Passing over the minor works, we get to 1878, when, being three large hexagons under la cupola and a few smaller diamonds completely worn out, Alessandro Franchi designed the beautiful scenes of Elijah prophesing « Ahab's death », the « Death of Ahab », « Eijah's Ascension to Heaven » and other minor scenes, which complete the series begum by Beccafumi in the othe scenes placed near these. In the renewed hexagons there were before these, other scenes, that is, parables of the « Beam in the Eye », the one showing the « Blind-man leading a Blind-man », and « An Old-man giving Alms », the remains of which are now in the « Museum of the Opera » and which date back to 1373 and 1433.

These are the news we have of this wonderful work which has analogies with mosaic, inlaid wood and also painting, but is instead something original and unique which has given the Sienese artist an everlasting fame, and to our Cathedral an ornament which has no equal in the world.

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1. - *Guidoccio Cozzarelli* - The Libyan Sibyl

2. - *Neroccio Landi* - The Ellespontine Sibyl

SOLVS DEVS SVM ET NON EST
DIVS ALIVS
TVBA DE CÆLO VOCEM LVCTVOSAMEMITET TARTAREVM CHAOS OSTENDET DEHISCENS TERRA VENETAD TRIBVNAL DEI REGES OMNES DEVS IPSE IVDICANS PIOS SIMVL ET IMPIOS TVNC DEMVM IMPIOS IGNEM ET TENEBRAS MITTET QVIA TEMPIETATEM TENET ITERV VIVENT.
SIBYLLA PHRYGIA QVÆ ANCYRÆ VATICINATA EST

3. - *Vito di Marco* - The Phrygian Sibyl

4. - *Matteo di Giovanni* - The Samian and Phrygian Sibyls

5. - *Benvenuto di Giovanni* - The Albumean Sibyl

6. - *Urbano da Cortona* - The Persian Sibyl

7. - *Antonio Federighi* - The Erythraean Sibyl

8. - *Giovanni di Stefano* - The Cuman Sibyl

9. - *Vito di Marco* - The Cumean Sibyl

10. - *Vito di Marco* - The Delphic Sibyl

11. - *Giovanni di Stefano* - Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus

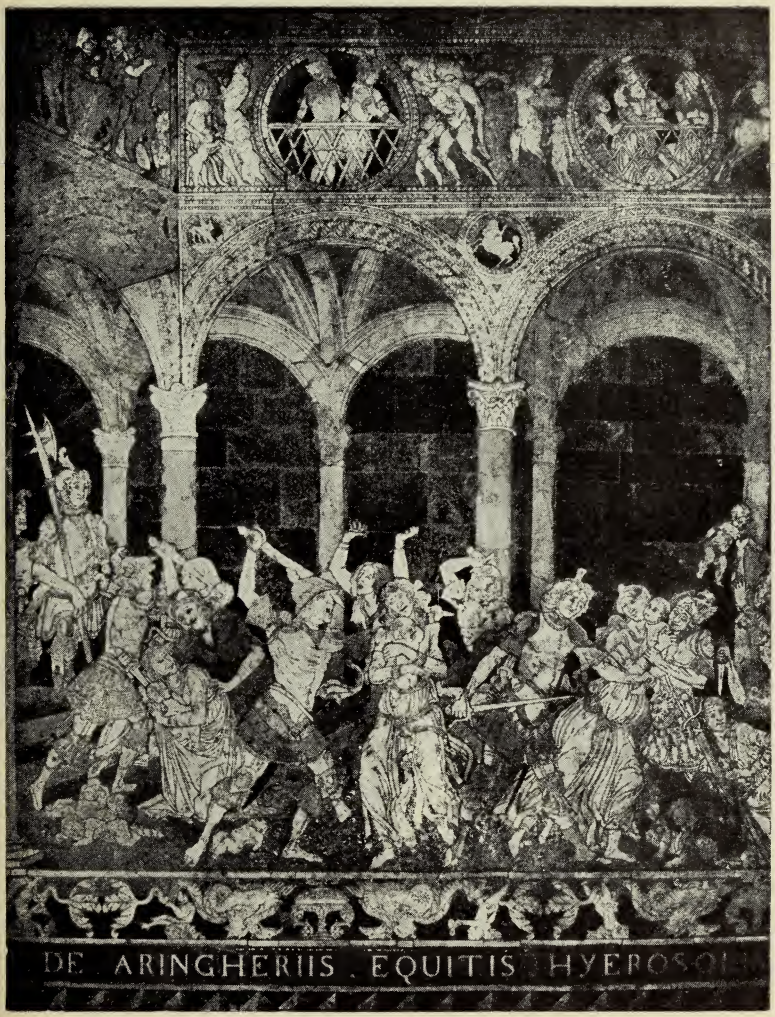
12. - Secolo XIV - Sienna and Towns allied

13. - *Bernardino Betti* - Human life under the sway of Fortune

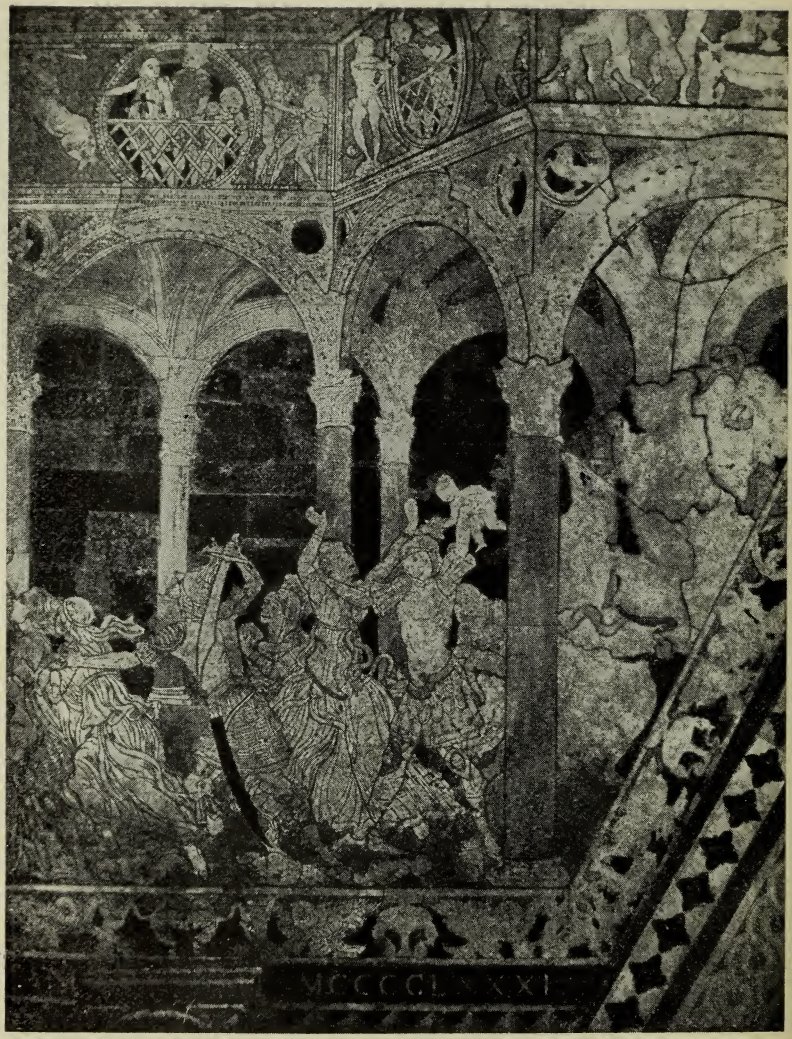
14 - *Bernardino Betti* - Fortune's wheel

15. - *Benvenuto di Giovanni* - The expulsion of Herod

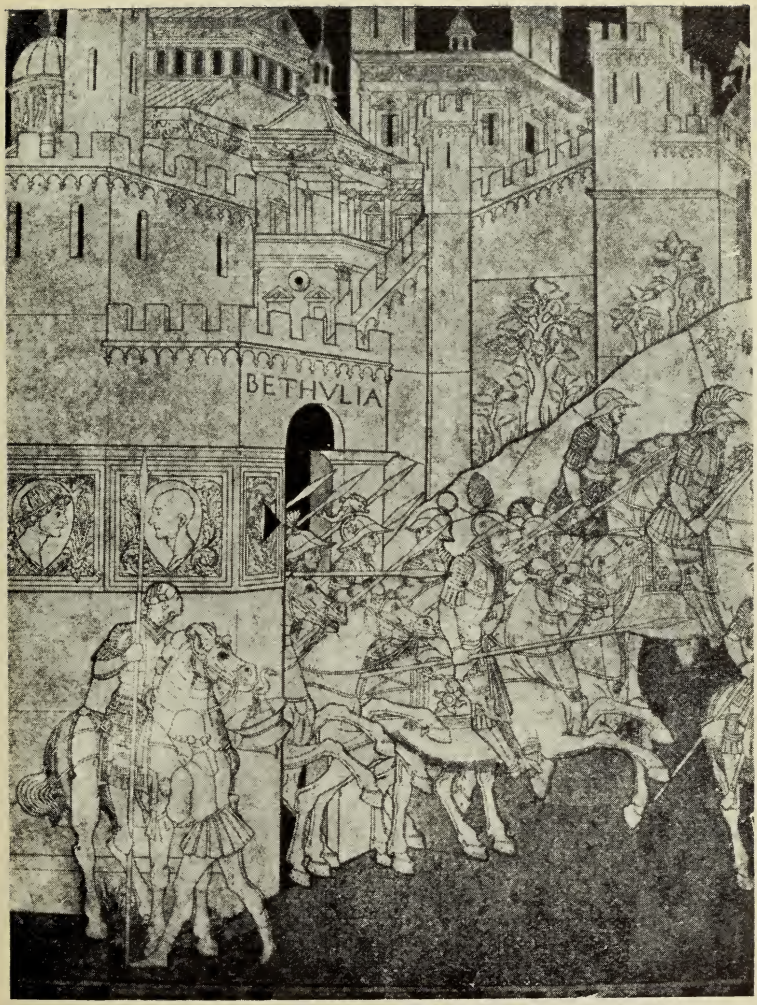
16. - *Matteo di Giovanni* - The massacre of the Innocents (detail)



17. - *Matteo di Giovanni* - The massacre of the Innocents (detail)



18. - *Matteo di Giovanni* - The massacre of the Innocents (detail)



19. - *Urbano da Cortona* - Giuditta libera Betulia (part.)

20. - *Urbano da Cortona* - Judith liberates Bethulia (detail)

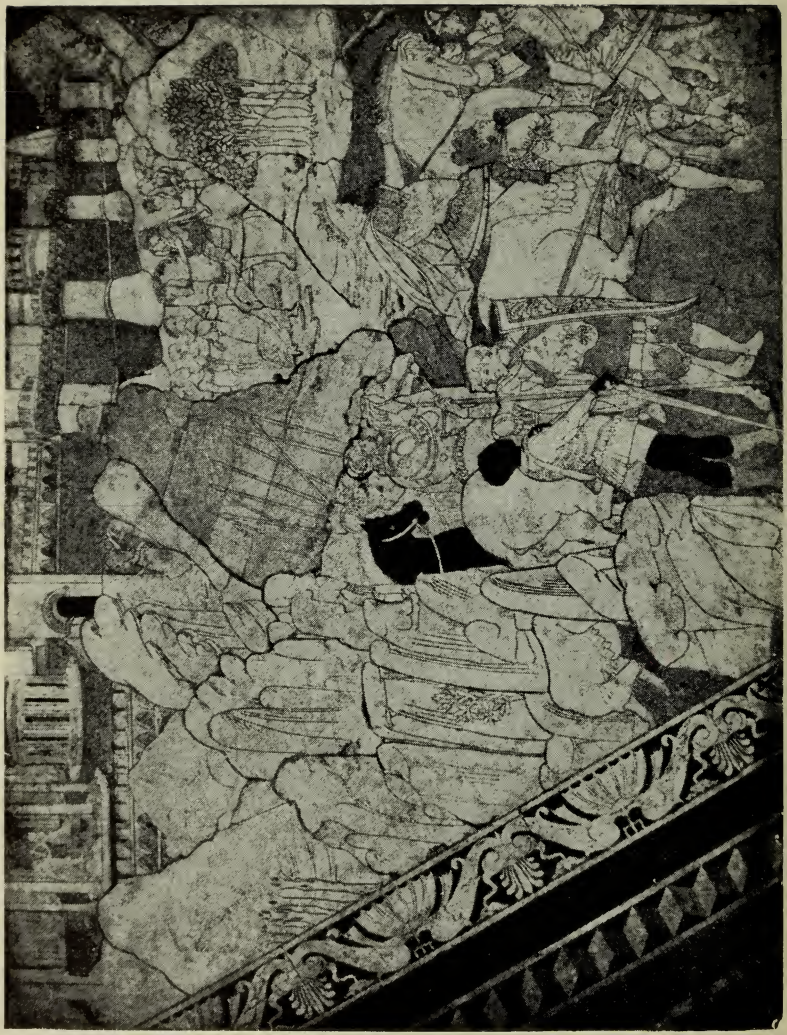
21. - *Domenico Beccafumi* - Moses receives the tables of the Law

22. - *Domenico Beccafumi* - Moses making water flow

23. - *Domenico Beccafumi* - Moses making water flow

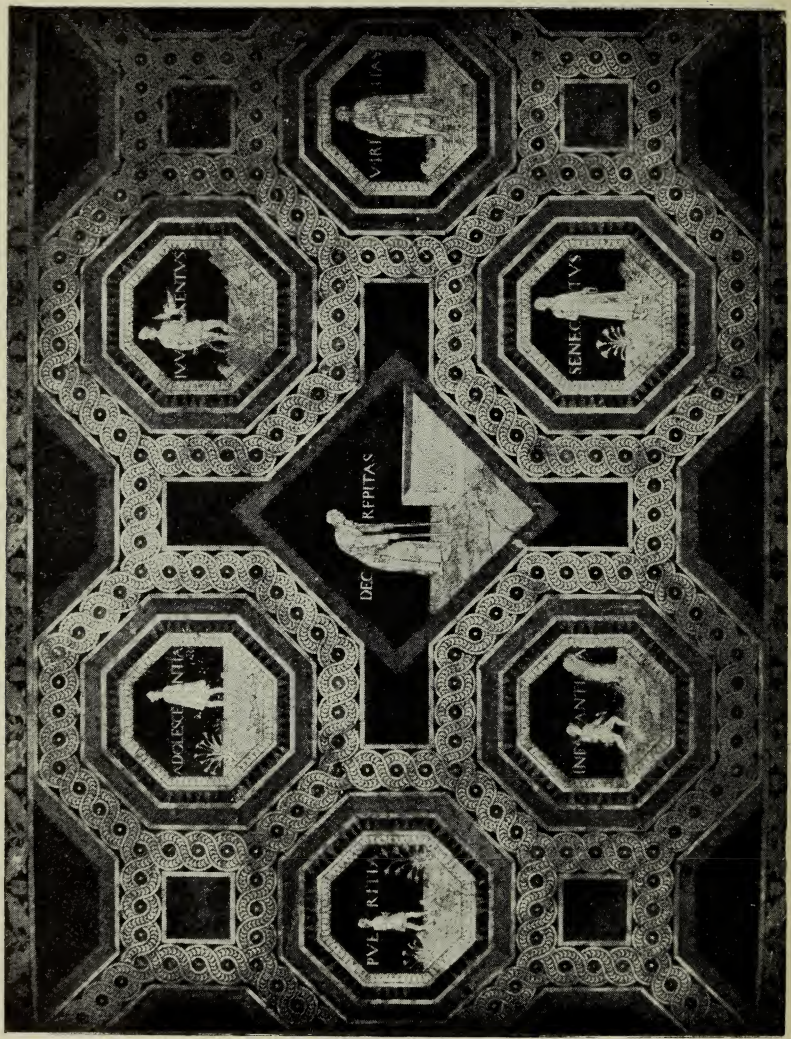
24. - *Domenico di Bartolo* - The Emperor Sigismondo on throne

25. - *Pietro del Minella* - The death of Absalom



26. - *Sebastiano di Francesco* - Story of Jephthah (detail)

27. - *Sebastiano di Francesco* - Story of Jephthah (detail)



28. - *Antonio Federighi* - The seven ages of man

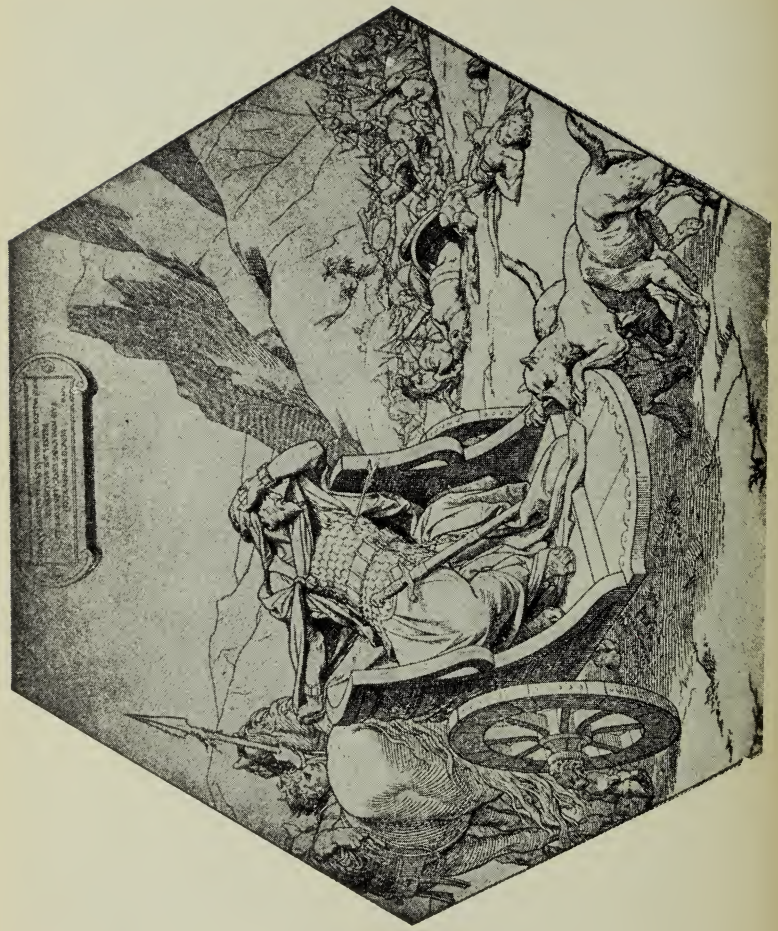
29. - *Alessandro Franchi* - Charity

30. - *Alessandro Franchi* - Religion

31. - *Alessandro Franchi* - Hope

32. - *Alessandro Franchi* - Faith

33. - *Alessandro Franchi* - Elijah brings the son of the widow to life again



34. - *Alessandro Franchi* - The death of Acab

35. - *Alessandro Franchi* - Elijah fed by the ravens

36. - *Domenico Beccafumi* - The sacrifice of Acab

37. - *Domenico Beccafumi* - The sacrifice of Elijah

38. - *Domenico Beccafumi* - Killing the false prophets of Baal

39 - *Alessandro Franchi* - Elijah anoints Jehu, king of Israel

40. - *Alessandro Franchi* - Elijah prophesies death to Acab

41. - *Alessandro Franchi* - Elijah asks for breary of the widow

42. - *Alessandro Franchi* - The triumph of Elijah

43. - *Domenico Beccafumi* - The pact between Elijah and Acab

44. - *Alessandro Franchi* - Detail of the expulsion of the king Herod

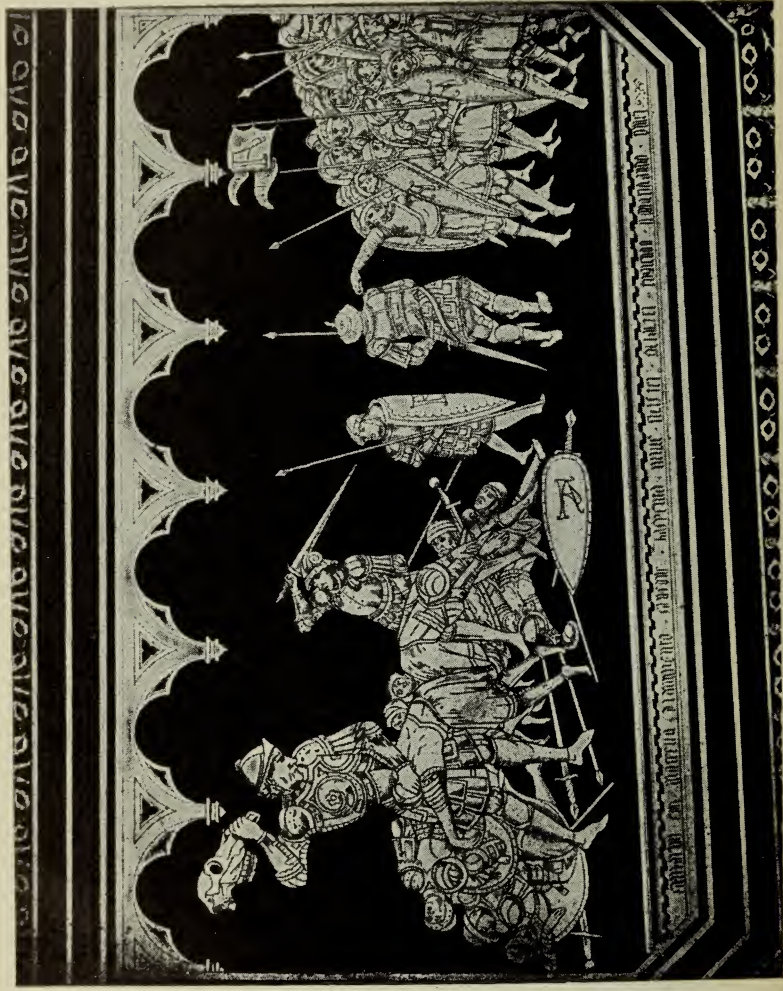
45. - *Paolo di Martino* - The five kings hanged

46. - *Domenico di Niccolò* - David the psalmist

47. - *Domenico di Niccolò* - Young David

48. - *Domenico di Niccolò* - The giant Goliath

49. - *Paolo di Martino* - Moses and Joshua



50. - *Paolo di Martino* - Samson fighting the Philistines

51. - *Domenico Beccafumi* - Abraham sacrifying Isaae

52. - Plan of the pavement